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ABSTRACT

Committee hearings are among the most important documents issued by Congress because they contain the transcript of testimony given before the committees. Here presumably the major proponents and opponents of a bill voice their opinions, recite facts and support their beliefs. The transcripts of proceedings of Congressional committee hearings are among the type of documents most often mentioned as presenting problems in the library because the form and arrangement in which they are printed makes them a troublesome type of publication. They are troublesome because there is no uniformity in the identity and numbering of these hearings. For this study, seventeen Senate and twenty House Committees were used. Hearings printed from 1944-1949 and 1956 to 1972 were examined regarding their respective histories and their current numbering systems. It was found that the Committees of Congress are slowly moving toward one numbering system--the combination code. This system is clear and precise. It relates the Congress in which the hearing was held as well as the number of the hearing. This numbering system will enable committee members, scholars, and interested citizens to utilize the hearings more effectively. (Author/NH)

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THE NUMBERING OF CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS

A PAPER

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MARILYN JOHNSON, B. A., B. S.

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Texas Woman's University

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We hereby recommend that the paper prepared under our supervision by Marilyn Johnson entitled "The Numbering of Congressional Hearings"

be accepted as fulfilling this part of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Library Science.

Committee:

John J. Minister
Chairman

Genevieve Slipon

Wallace E. Houk

Accepted:

Dean of Graduate Studies

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I. INTRODUCTION

Briefly stated, hearings are committee sessions for listening to witnesses. The committee or subcommittee sets the date for public hearings with advance notice published in the Congressional Record and often in daily newspapers or periodicals. In addition personal notes are frequently sent to individuals, organizations, and agencies of the government known to be interested in the subject matter.

The hearing usually begins with a complete reading of the bill followed by comments by the committee chairman and by the ruling minority member of the committee or subcommittee. Persons wishing to testify are then heard with priority given to other members of the House or Senate. These, if any, are usually followed by high officers of the pertinent agencies of the executive branch before the testimony of agents of private organizations or interested citizens is taken.[1] Usually all who wish to offer testimony will be given an opportunity to do so.

Providing an opportunity to interested parties to present their views on an issue increases the likelihood that proper consideration will be given to the potential

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[1]George S. Blair, Legislatures, Structures and Process (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), p. 216.

effect of Congressional action. Hearings also inform the public and interested groups that a particular measure is under consideration, thus providing the voters with an opportunity to make their wishes known in advance of Congressional action.[1]

After the completion of the public hearing, a typewritten transcript is made available for inspection in the office of the clerk of the committee. If the hearing is to be printed, the printing is ordered by the committee.

Technically speaking hearings are not publications of Congress, as they are not ordered by either house. The hearings provide an opportunity for interested groups and individuals to present their viewpoints and versions of the facts to a committee. Sometimes the need for information is enough to justify a broad investigation of the whole problem, perhaps lasting for months, while on other occasions the study is limited to the specific provisions and immediate implications of a bill.[2] A hearing may last one day or an entire session.

The formal organization of the committees is simple enough. For each major agency or function of government, there is a corresponding standing committee, subcommittee

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[1]Charles L. Clapp, The Congressman, His Work as He Sees It (Washington, D. C.: The Brookings Institution, 1963), p. 265.

[2]Malcolm E. Zewell and Samuel C. Patterson, The Legislative Process in the United States (New York: Random House, 1966), p. 454.

or joint committee. Each committee and subcommittee in the course of its investigation normally holds hearings, some open to the public, others in closed or executive session.

The effectiveness of their work in giving Congress the information necessary for wise legislation varies from committee to committee. "Library shelves are burdened with Congressional committee reports, which are never read and accomplish little more than to gather dust and increase library appropriations."[1]

The printing of the hearing is ordered by the committee, and usually the entire stock is delivered to it except for the copies which are sent to depository libraries and those occasional hearings which are placed on sale by the Superintendent of Documents at the request of the committee. Copies may generally be obtained from the committee as long as the supply lasts, but it is not always possible to secure older issues, as a new clerk may consign the accumulated stock to the wastebasket.

As the printed hearing is presumably only for the use of the committee, the number of copies ordered was formerly very limited. Protests by librarians and students resulted, in 1924, in a larger printing and a provision by which hearings could be purchased from the Superintendent of Documents. By act of June 25, 1938 depository libraries

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[1]Peter H. Odegard and Hans H. Baerwald, The American Republic, Its Government and Politics (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p. 37.

are now entitled to receive regularly all printed congressional hearings.[1]

Committee hearings are among the most important documents issued by Congress. They do not constitute a real series, although the word hearing generally appears on the title page. According to the Librarian of the Senate, there is no uniformity in the identity and numbering of Congressional committee hearings.[2] "Some are designated numerically, some alphabetically; some series run through a session, some through a Congress and some continuously."[3]

Hearings contain the transcript of testimony given before committees. Here presumably the major proponents and opponents of a bill voice their opinions, recite facts and support such beliefs, and then return backstage while the committee or subcommittee reaches a decision and sends a report containing its recommendations to the floor of the House or Senate.

In addition to the well-accepted role of enabling committee members to uncover the facts relative to advantages and disadvantages of a legislative proposal, Truman notes that one obvious purpose of a hearing is to provide

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[1]Anne Morris Boyd, United States Government Publications (3rd ed.; New York: H. W. Wilson, 1949), p. 56.

[2]Richard D. Hupman, letter to the author, July 31, 1971.

[3]Laurence F. Schmeckebier and Roy B. Easton, Government Publications and Their Use (2nd ed.; Washington, D. C.: The Brookings Institution, 1969), p. 167.

"a means of transmitting information, both technical and political, from various actual and potential interest groups to the committee."[1] The second major role of hearings is to "serve as a propaganda channel through which a public may be extended and its segments partially consolidated or reinforced"[2] and thirdly, hearings serve as "a quasi-ritualistic means of adjusting group conflict and relieving disturbances through a safety valve."[3] The latter two roles are much more important than the first. Clem Mill places more importance on the classical function of hearings than does Truman. At some points in the development of a measure, the primary purpose of hearings lies in their propaganda value.

Another valuable function of hearings in the view of some Congressmen is that, by prolonging the discussion, they provide time for the political climate to change, thus facilitating acceptance of the program under discussion. Hearings may prove beneficial in pointing out implications of the language of the bill which had not been foreseen. Committee hearings may also serve as a source of ideas regarding legislative proposals not directly associated with the subject under discussion.

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[1]William Lockhart Morrow, Congressional Committees (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), p. 72.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

Some interesting innovations have been tried in recent Congresses. Hearings have been held in the field, and advisory panels of experts have been organized. These devices have been most frequently used in committees handling technical subjects.

The transcripts of the proceedings of Congressional committee hearings are among the type of documents most often mentioned as presenting problems in the library. The form and arrangement in which hearings are printed makes them a troublesome type of publication. There is little uniformity in their designation. They are not issued as a single Congressional series with a consecutive numerical or other designation, but each committee has its own form of title page or method of designation. Often the title page gives only the subject and not the bill number, but some hearings list the numbers of several bills on the same subject. In many instances the titles assigned to hearings by corresponding committees of the Senate and House lack uniformity even though the subject under consideration is identical.[1] Often the title does not adequately describe the contents of a hearing. It is fairly common for one hearing to fill a dozen or twenty volumes, but taken together they contain information and expert testimony on

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[1]Mary F. Sterrett, Quadrennial Supplement to Cumulative Index of Congressional Committee Hearings From Eighty-Sixth Congress Through Eighty-Seventh Congress (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1963), p. v.

virtually every aspect of government and civilization in the United States.[1]

> Among the most frequent criticisms are these: Hearings are preceded by insufficient planning; the scope of subjects covered by them is much too limited; too little effort is made to evaluate the information presented; the same witnesses representing the same groups tend to appear at hearing after hearing; the junior members of congress are often not accepted by their seniors as full participants in the hearing process; chairmen are sometimes too arbitrary in their exercise of authority; and too little effort is made to obtain a full discussion of a controversial measure.[2]

Complaints have been made by librarians against the unnecessarily confusing practices followed by the committees but nothing has been done as yet to remedy them.

The value of hearings as social and economic documents, while always recognized by scholars, is more fully appreciated today than ever before, and they are generally considered among the most important of the Congressional publications. Of particular value for library reference service are the hearings on appropriations and deficiency appropriation bills, where often may be found more detailed statistical and descriptive data relating to the activities of the government department or body to which they pertain than are given anywhere else.

Some libraries prefer to bind hearings into composite volumes rather than to classify each one separately. The

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[1]Odegard, American Republic, p. 370.

[2]Clapp, Congressman, p. 267.

arrangement of the hearings of each committee as a continuing series is preferable to binding the hearings of all committees of one Congress as a unit.[1] The subject matter of the hearings of a committee has considerable continuity, at least in many important instances, such as the hearings on appropriation bills, Indian affairs and public lands, to name only a few.

For the purposes of this study, seventeen committees of the Senate and twenty committees of the House were selected. Hearings printed from 1944-1949 and 1956 to the present were examined. The next chapters relate their respective histories and their current numbering systems.

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[1]Ellen Jackson, A Manual for the Administration of the Federal Documents Collection in Libraries (Chicago: American Library Association, 1955), p. 76.

II. PRESENT NUMBERING SYSTEMS

Eleven of the twenty-one committees of the House and three of the seventeen committees of the Senate selected for this study have a numbering system at the present time (see Charts 1 and 2). Of those committees that do not have a numbering system, the Committee on Rules and Administration and Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs of the Senate reason that their committees do not hold enough hearings to consider a numbering system.

The Committee on Agriculture and Forestry of the Senate does not number its hearings but does maintain files by subject, bill number and date of hearings.[1] The Committee on Standards of Official Conduct of the House also maintains a file for reference purposes.[2] The Committee on House Administration of the House relies on the Clerk of the House who catalogs hearings, reports and other material and files them in the House Library, while the Committee on Post Office and Civil Service of the Senate relies on the Senate Library. The Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate feels

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[1]Cotys M. Mouser, letter to the author, August 3, 1971.

[2]John M. Swanner, letter to the author, September 2, 1971.

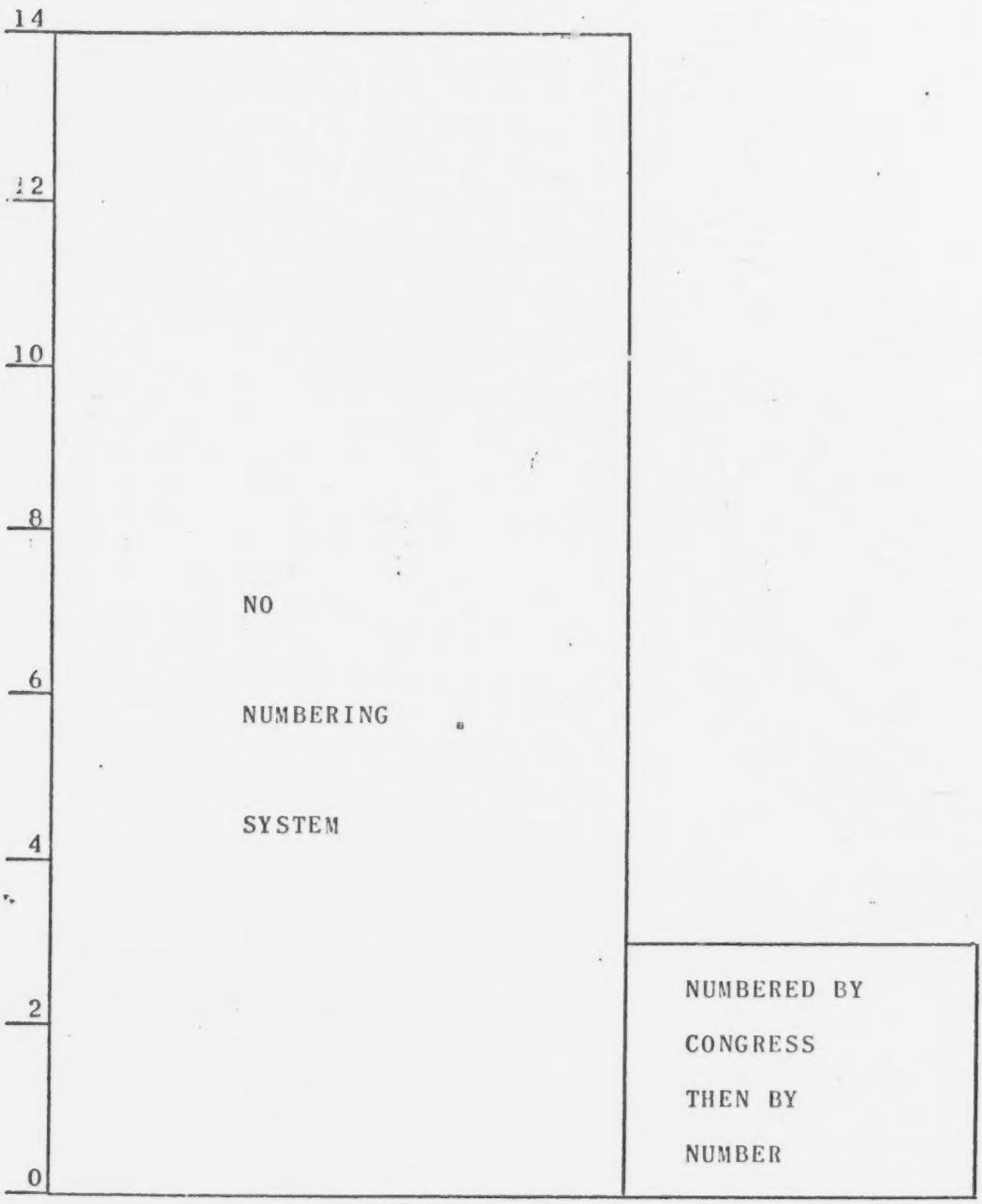

Chart 1.--Senate numbering systems

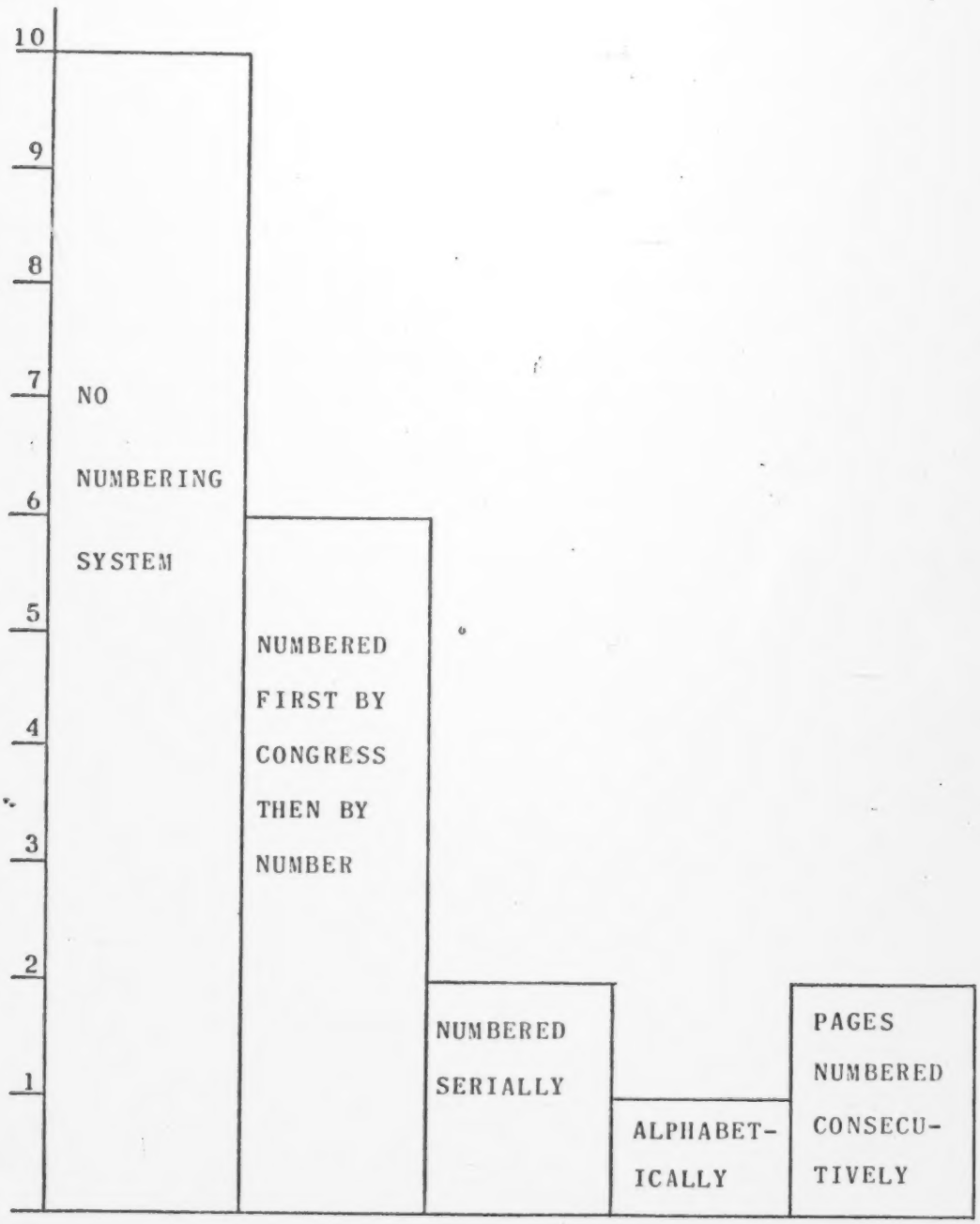

Chart 2.--House numbering systems

that the identification of hearings by subject, title, Congress and date of hearing is enough for their purpose.[1]

The Committee on Aeronautical and Space Sciences of the Senate and the Committee on Government Operations of the House rely on a private organization called Congressional Information Service which publishes the CIS Index. This index uses special coded numerical references to such things as committee hearings, committee prints, House and Senate reports, House and Senate documents, etc.[2] The monthly publication includes a brief summary of each document. In addition, the Service publishes a quarterly index which includes a cumulative index of subjects and names, cumulative index of bills, report and document number and an index of committee and subcommittee chairmen.

Other committees that do not have a numbering system include:

House of Representatives
- Appropriations
- Banking and Currency
- District of Columbia
- Education and Labor
- Foreign Affairs
- Rules
- Ways and Means

Senate
- Appropriations
- Armed Services
- District of Columbia

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[1]John H. Holloman, letter to the author, August 18, 1971.

[2]Christine Ray Davis, letter to the author, September 10, 1971.

Finance
Foreign Relations
Government Operations
Labor and Public Welfare
Veterans' Affairs

Each hearing has its subject at the top of the title page with the bill number usually at the middle. If the hearing is not concerned with a particular bill, the subject and number of the committee constitute the title page. Many committees include more than one hearing in a volume. These hearings, however, are usually on the same subject with several bill numbers listed on the title page. When the committee numbers their printed hearings the number is placed under the bill number, if there is one. The Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House considers all bills on a given subject at the same time and does not list bills on the title page.[1] The system of identifying hearings by a short title or by bill number only does make identification at a glance difficult.

The Committee on Appropriations of the House prints all of its hearings together. It breaks off the volume when it reaches from 1,000 to 1,300 pages or when the committee wishes to separate a hearing on a special topic.[2]

The Committee on the Judiciary and Committee on Science and Astronautics of the House have a simple

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[1]Olin E. Teague, letter to the author, September 3, 1971.

[2]Paul M. Wilson, letter to the author, August 12, 1971.

numbering system (see Chart 3). The committee's hearings are numbered in consecutive order at such time as they are sent to the Government Printing Office for final print.[1] The numbers commence with each new Congress and run consecutively through the second session.

The Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Armed Services of the House have a unique way of making their hearings available for study. The pagination of all hearings is cumulative, which enables the staff to prepare the index to all hearings at the conclusion of each Congress.[2] The Committee on Armed Services uses, in addition, a number on each hearing.

The Committee on Agriculture has a truly unique system of numbering. The first part of the designation refers to the Congress and the second part is alphabetical beginning with Serial 92-A and continuing through the end of the alphabet. The system then continues, with double letters, such as 92-AA and, if necessary, continuing further with three letters. The system runs through both sessions of Congress.

The most popular numbering code is that in which the first number designates the Congress in which the hearing was held and printed. The second number only indicates the numerical order in which the hearings were

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[1]Teague, letter, September 3, 1971.

[2]Ibid.

Committee	No Number	Combination Code	Consecutive Number	Alphabetical	Consecutive Pages
Agriculture		X			
Appropriations	X				
Armed Services		X			X
Banking and Currency	X				
District of Columbia	X				
Education and Labor	X				
Foreign Affairs	X				
Government Operations	X				
House Administration	X				
Interior and Insular Affairs		X			
Interstate and Foreign Commerce		X			
Judiciary			X		
Merchant Marine		X			
Post Office		X			
Public Works		X			
Rules	X				
Science and Astronautics			X		
Standards of Official Conduct	X				
Veterans' Affairs	X				X
Ways and Means	X				

Chart 3.--Present numbering systems of the House

printed.[1] Thus this Congress, the Ninety-Second Congress, the hearings are numbered 92-1, 92-2, etc. This is done for easy identification. The numbers go through both sessions. This combination code reflects merely the order in which hearings became available in printed form, rather than the sequence of dates when the hearings were held. For instance, a one or two day hearing held at a more recent date than a ten or fifteen day hearing may bear a serial number lower than the lenghy hearing held at an earlier date.[2] The following committees have the combination code (see Charts 3 and 4):

House of Representatives
- Armed Services
- Interior and Insular Affairs
- Interstate and Foreign Commerce
- Merchant Marine
- Post Office
- Public Works

Senate
- Commerce
- Interior and Insular Affairs
- Public Works

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[1]Donald A. Watt, letter to the author, September 21, 1971.

[2]W. E. Williamson, letter to the author, September 10, 1971.

Committee	No Number	Combination Code	Consecutive Number	Alphabetical	Consecutive Pages
Aeronautical and Space	X				
Agriculture	X				
Appropriations	X				
Armed Services	X				
Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs	X				
Commerce		X			
District of Columbia	X				
Finance	X				
Foreign Relations	X				
Government Operations	X				
Interior and Insular Affairs		X			
Judiciary	X				
Labor and Public Welfare	X				
Post Office and Civil Service	X				
Public Works		X			
Rules and Administration	X				
Veterans' Affairs	X				

Chart 4.--Present numbering systems of the Senate

III. HISTORY OF NUMBERING SYSTEMS

Many committees have used more than one numbering system throughout their history (see Charts 5 and 6). The Senate Committee on Commerce used a simple serial number beginning with the Eighty-eighth Congress, first session, in 1963. The committee changed to the combination code in the Eighty-ninth Congress, first session, in 1965. As mentioned previously, the combination code combines the number of the Congress with a simple serial number.

Several Senate committees have never had a numbering system. These include:

Aeronautical and Space Sciences
Agriculture
Appropriations
Armed Services
Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs
District of Columbia
Finance
Foreign Relations
Government Operations
Judiciary
Labor and Public Welfare
Post Office and Civil Service
Rules and Administration
Veterans' Affairs

The committees of the House that have never had a numbering system include:

Appropriations
Banking and Currency
District of Columbia

Committee	No Number	Combination Code	Consecutive Number	Alphabetical	Consecutive Pages
Agriculture		X		X	
Appropriations	X				
Armed Services		X	X		X
Banking and Currency	X				
District of Columbia	X				
Education and Labor	X				
Foreign Affairs	X				
Government Operations	X				
House Administration	X				
Interior and Insular Affairs		X	X		
Interstate and Foreign Commerce		X			
Judiciary		X	X		
Merchant Marine and Fisheries		X			
Post Office		X			
Public Works		X	X		
Rules	X				
Science and Astronautics			X		
Standards of Official Conduct	X				
Veterans' Affairs					X
Ways and Means	X				

Chart 5.--House numbering systems used in the past

Committee	No Number	Combi-nation Code	Consec-utive Number	Alpha-beti cal	Consec-utive Pages
Aeronautical and Space Sciences	X				
Agriculture	X				
Appropriations	X				
Armed Services	X				
Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs	X				
Commerce		X	X		
District of Columbia	X				
Finance	X				
Foreign Relations	X				
Government Operations	X				
Interior and Insular Affairs		X			
Judiciary	X				
Labor and Public Welfare	X				
Post Office and Civil Service	X				
Public Works		X			
Rules and Administration	X				
Veterans' Affairs	X				

Chart 6.--Senate numbering systems used in the past

Education and Labor
Foreign Affairs
Government Operations
House Administration
Rules
Standards of Official Conduct
Ways and Means

In the House the Committee on Agriculture started numbering its hearings alphabetically in the Eighty-first Congress, first session, in 1949 (see Chart 7). The committee changed to the unique numbering system that combines the number of the Congress with the alphabet. This new system began in the Ninety-second Congress, first session, in 1971.

In 1967 the House Committee on Armed Services started numbering the pages of its hearings consecutively so that a comprehensive index could be compiled at the end of the Congress. The idea of consecutive pagination originated with the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, who used the system as early as the Eighty-first Congress, 1949. The Committee on Veterans' Affairs, however, has no other numbering system. The Committee on Armed Services started using a single numerical system in the Eighty-ninth Congress in 1965. In the Ninety-first Congress, first session, the hearings were numbered 1-8 then in May, 1969, the committee changed to 91-9.

The House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs has also changed its numbering system from a simple numerical one, which began before the Eighty-fourth Congress, to

-1944 -78th Congress	House--Judiciary
1945-1946 79th Congress	
1947-1948 80th Congress	House--Public Works
1949-1950 81st Congress	House--Agriculture House--Veterans' Affairs
1951-1952 82nd Congress	
1953-1954 83rd Congress	
1955-1956 84th Congress	House--Interior and Insular Affairs
1957-1958 85th Congress	
1959-1960 86th Congress	
1961-1962 87th Congress	
1963-1964 88th Congress	Senate--Commerce House--Merchant Marine and Fisheries
1965-1966 89th Congress	House--Interstate and Foreign Commerce House--Armed Services
1967-1968 90th Congress	House--Post Office and Civil Service
1969-1970 91st Congress	House--Science and Astronautics Senate--Public Works
1971-1972 92nd Congress	Senate--Interior and Insular Affairs

Chart 7.--Institution of numbering systems

the combination code in the Eighty-ninth Congress. The hearings were numbered numerically until October, 1965, then were assigned combination numbers, starting with 89-19.

The House Committee on the Judiciary cannot seem to make up its mind. It was using a simple numerical system, started before 1944, until 1969. During the Nineth-first Congress it numbered the first eight hearings then changed to a combination hearing number until 91-23, then changed back to a simple serial number.

The House Committee on Public Works had a simple numbering system as early as the Eightieth Congress in 1947. It changed to the combination number between the Eightieth and the Eighty-seventh Congress.

IV. CONCLUSION

As can be seen from the previous chapters on the current state of the numbering systems and their history, the committees of Congress are slowly moving toward one numbering system--the combination code. This system is clear and precise. It relates the Congress in which the hearing was held as well as the number of the hearing.

Fourteen committees of the Senate and ten committees of the House have never used a numbering system. Some of these committees reason that the amount of hearings held by them does not warrant a numbering system. However, the majority of these committees are not aware of the very existence of any numbering systems, much less the necessity of having a numbering system.

The number of Congressional committees that do not have a numbering system is becoming fewer each year. They are beginning to realize that the serial number is invaluable to them as a filing device and to library patrons as a finding device.

The importance of the Congressional hearings cannot be overstated. They are indispensable not only to the members of the committee but to the scholar and interested citizen. The numbering system will enable all these groups to utilize the hearing more effectively.

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